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<sup>1</sup> I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters<sup>[a]</sup>, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual<sup>[b]</sup> worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world<sup>[c]</sup>, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:1-2 (NRSV)

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Note Youtube Video – Chris Yarran 'A life Powerfully Restored'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUBmwi7EdY4>

As Christians, we are called to live 'the good life'. Almost all the New Testament letters – whilst beginning with discussions on theological issues – seem to conclude with exhortations to a particular way of life for the Christian (cf. 10 Commandments). And these exhortations seem to stress not being 'conformed' to 'this world' (or 'this 'age' or 'this way of thinking'). It's like God wishes us to 'swim against the tide'.

But what does it mean to be 'different'... to 'not conform....? Here God is not calling us to some sort of silly radical nature – but to conform to something else – His ideas and ideals for us... His new life for us... to be what He has re-created us to be...

Thus, Paul speaks about living a 'transformed life', lived by the 'renewing of your mind'. This is a life to be lived according to 'the will of God', involving that which is 'good and acceptable and perfect'.

On this point, one Christian writer has said this: *A transformed mind understands and approves the will of God. It perceives and thinks with the kingdom view. The word transformed is metamorphoō. It has the same preposition for the first word as repent, meta. I am sure the second word morphoō sounds familiar to you. It is metamorphosis. We all know what happens to a caterpillar when it goes into metamorphosis, it becomes a new creation, a butterfly; it is in essence, born again. This is the imagery here. Our minds are transformed to such a degree that it is like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. Transformation is also the same word used for transfiguration in Matthew 17:2. The transforming of the mind is the same as the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain in which the whole place was saturated by heaven. In the comparison of the two, repentance and transformation or transfiguration, we have an inside-outside picture of the transforming of our mind leading to the transforming of our bodies or lives. Renewing in the Greek is to make new, literally meaning upwards or up again and new, fresh. We are transformed when our minds are upwards again. Awesome, a heavenly mind is a renewed mind. This is the perspective we need.*

At this point we may ask what a 'transformed life' may look like. Here some Bible passages may apply: Romans 8:12-13: "I am in the flesh, but I am not living according to the flesh."; John 15:18-19: "I am in the world, but I am not of this world."; Galatians 5:13: "I have been set free, but I am not free from Christ."; Matthew 5:14-16: "I am dedicated to living as a light, but not for my own glory."; Colossians 3:1-4: "My life is hidden in Christ, but I am not hiding from God."; Ecclesiastes 12:7: "I am living in view of eternity, but I know that my time here is limited."

Another writer has put it like this (in promoting a spiritual retreat for living a 'daring life'). Take the word 'Dare' as an acronym he begins by speaking of the need for discernment, that is, exploring God's Word and asking 'What is God's will for my life?' Ephesians 5 says this (5:17): *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.* This 'discernment' was then explained as testing what you encounter with the guiding power of the living and active word of God (Hebrews 4:12).

Second, one needs to 'adopt' this 'attitude': "to assume for oneself; to put into effect." Transformation is not a spectator sport. This writer also states: *"It's one thing to discover God's will for my life. It's quite another thing to personally apply what I've learned. The second step to genuine transformation is to adopt God's way of thinking."*

Third is 'renewal'. Paul writes in Galatians 2:20, *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."* Thus, a 'new self' has been 'put on'. Thus, Paul also writes in Galatians 2:20, *"And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."* The crucifixion of the old self of sin must translate into practical transformation of conduct.

This, then, will mean 'engagement', that is, to assume an obligation or responsibility. You are the light of the world; you are the salt of the earth (Matthew 5). Present your bodies as 'living sacrifices'. In Romans 12 the Holy Spirit does more than simply say, "Be living sacrifices."

He moves from the straightforward divine expectation to the realm of clear practical application (as we will hear next week with words about 'genuine love': Romans 12:9-21).

But there is a problem here with 'the good life' and it's like the 'Good's lives'. Always there are inconsistencies. Always there is failing on my part. Always there is sin. Always there is guilt. Always there is pride. Always there is despair. Who can really say they live the 'good life'? Who can ever say, "I have done nothing wrong?"

Thus, when we speak about the 'transformed life' we really need to listen again to how Paul begins: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters by

the mercies of God (or, as in NIV in view of God's mercy), to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual (or 'reasonable) worship."

"In view of God's mercy..." There has ever only been one 'sacrifice' truly 'acceptable' to God, and that is our Lord Jesus Christ. All other 'Old Testament sacrifices' were ultimately 'pointers' to Him. And all we do is ever only done in light of who Jesus is, and what Jesus has done for us. There has ever only been one person who has brought true 'transformation' to our world, and that is Jesus.

One Christian writer has put it like this: *Grace is both the means and the motivation for heeding Paul's exhortation. Paul's appeal is based on the "mercies of God," mercies which have been described in much greater detail in chapters 1-11.* Another writer has also said, *"While the argument of the letter to the Romans opened with a preoccupation regarding God's anger (1:18-32), this section of the letter opens with an embrace of God's mercies."*

It is 'good' to try to live the 'good life'. Practically, another writer has explained it this way: *striving to be holy (1:7); worshiping God rather than other created thing (1:18-25); recognising that all people are prone to sin and stand under God's judgment (2:1-2, 14-16; 3:9-20); we do not "boast" or take credit for our faith (3:27-28); we live in hope, opening ourselves to God's love expressed through Christ even while experiencing hardships (5:3-11).*

What kind of offering does the God want? What does God want from you and me? Very simply (perhaps, too simply?) we are to live life "in the light of all that God has done for you and me in Jesus; 'in view of God's mercies'."

In Romans 5:8 the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul says this: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." "In view of God's mercies...": without God's mercy we are simply lost. Our lives are transformed by the cross of Jesus. Here is God's forgiveness and love for all people. We live knowing that this love has been shone on us, as for all people. God loves us, forgives our sins and promises us His presence, His peace and His strength, in this life, and the next. We have a great gift in Christ Jesus, our Saviour.

A view of God's compassion and mercy – that's what the apostle gives us. This view stretches as far as the eye can see. It goes way off into our future, beyond our fears and worries. His mercy stretches beyond our life here. It even goes beyond them, and on into eternity and the life to which the Lord has called us. What a view!

May God help us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to him because we are the recipients of the mercies of God, through the body of Christ. Amen.